

The Apostle Paul

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Professor Johnson taught at Yale Divinity School from 1976 to 1982, and at Indiana University from 1982 to 1992, before accepting his current position. He is the author of nineteen books, including *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (2nd edition, 1998), which is used widely as a textbook. He has also published several hundred articles and reviews. He is currently at work on a number of books, including a major monograph on the influence of Greco-Roman religion on Christianity.

Professor Johnson has taught undergraduates, as well as M.A. and Ph.D. students. At Indiana University, he received the President's Award for Distinguished Teaching, was elected a member of the Faculty Colloquium on Excellence in Teaching, and won the Brown Derby and Student Choice awards for teaching. At Emory, he has twice received the "On Eagle's Wings Excellence in Teaching" award. In 1997–1998, he was a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar, in which capacity he spoke at college campuses across the country.

Professor Johnson is married to Joy Randazzo. They share seven children, nine grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and a Yorkshire Terrier named Bailey. Professor Johnson is also the lecturer in the course called *Early Christianity: The Experience of the Divine* for the Teaching Company.

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The Apostle Paul

Scope:

One of the most fascinating—some would say repelling—figures in the religious history of the West, Paul the Apostle continues to find champions and detractors, sometimes in surprising places. Because his letters became part of the Christian Bible, Paul had the misfortune of becoming memorialized as Scripture. His writings have been endlessly scoured as sources for Christian doctrine and morals. His personality has been just as endlessly analyzed as one of the great converters (or turncoats, depending on one's perspective) in history. His views on women, slaves, and homosexuals continue to be contentious.

What is most surprising in all the controversy Paul creates is how little attention is actually paid to the things with which he was most concerned: the stability and integrity of the tiny Christian communities to which he wrote letters. The scope of this course focuses attention precisely to these letters to learn something about Paul in the context of early Christianity. What were the problems with which his readers had to deal? What were the ways in which Paul characteristically dealt with his communities? How did his letters themselves sometimes create as many problems as they solved? Why was Paul a figure at once highly defined, yet strangely ambiguous? By reading his letters as individual literary compositions, we begin to hear Paul's voice fresh, speaking to real-life situations and genuine community crises. We read Paul not as Holy Scripture and not as systematic theology but as the catch-as-catch-can moral instruction of new communities by their founder and pastor.

Such reading yields a picture of Paul that is far more complex than the positive or negative stereotypes, because the picture is drawn from life, rather than Holy Writ. We find a Paul who struggles to establish the authority to teach even in a community that he has founded (1 Corinthians), then finds its allegiance slipping away just as he is engaged in the greatest act of his career (2 Corinthians). We discover a Paul who writes to relieve a community's mind (1 Thessalonians) only to find that he has enflamed its imagination (2 Thessalonians). We appreciate a Paul who seeks to realize an egalitarian ideal, and succeeds on some fronts (Galatians), but has only ambiguous results (Philemon) and undoubtedly fails (1 Timothy) on others. We see a Paul who sets out to raise money for a future trip and ends up creating a theological masterwork (Romans), who finds himself captive in Roman prisons, yet able to reach into ever greater extensions of his mission (Colossians, Ephesians). Perhaps most remarkably, we learn the heart of a Paul who became known as the Apostle of the Gentiles, yet to the end of his days, yearned for the saving of his own Jewish people.

The only requirement for this course is the willingness to work with Paul as he thinks his way through the problems he faces. The payoff is learning why Paul had such an enormous influence through these letters and remains a vital force in the religious life of millions.

Lecture One

An Apostle Admired and Despised

Scope: Paul is the most important, most controversial, and least understood figure in earliest Christianity. A Jewish persecutor of Jesus's first followers, he became Christianity's most visible and provocative advocate, a key agent in extending membership to gentiles. Embattled during his lifetime, Paul continues to polarize opinion. This lecture sketches some of the ways Paul has been regarded by admirers and despisers, suggests some reasons for such widely variant views, and provides an overview of the approach taken in this course: We read Paul's letters to gain a better understanding of his distinctive experience, the issues he faced, his way of thinking, and how all these left an indelible impression on the Christian religion.

Outline

- I. Paul's importance for understanding the Christian religion is based both in his historical activity and in the influence of his writings.
 - A. Paul was an important missionary of the first generation who founded churches across the Mediterranean world. He started out as a persecutor, then became Christianity's most passionate advocate.
 - B. He was a key figure, if not *the* key figure, in the gentile mission by which Christianity became a world religion rather than a Jewish sect.
 1. Gentiles were accepted into Christianity without having to be circumcised or having to observe Mosaic law.
 2. The paradox is that Paul did this as a Pharisaic Jew: a man, who in his former life would not have eaten with a gentile, is now the fiercest defender for their inclusion in the People of God.
 - C. Paul's letters, written 50–68 A.D., provide the earliest extant interpretation of Jesus and of the movement connected to the name of Jesus.
 - D. Paul dominates the New Testament canon: His adventures form the climax of the Acts of the Apostles, and his thirteen letters are the core of the collection that became the New Testament.
 - E. Paul's has been the most distinctive, if not the most dominant, voice in Christian theology, so that coming to grips with Christianity has meant coming to grips with Paul.
- II. The evaluation of Paul's role has always involved controversy.
 - A. For all Christians, Paul has been "The Apostle," the source of authoritative teaching and the spirit of reformation. For some Christians, Paul is the "canon within the canon" of the New Testament.
 - B. For Christianity's detractors, Paul is equally central, as the source of what is wrong in the Christian religion. This is often stated in terms of a "good Jesus, bad Paul."
 1. Jews regard Paul as the source of Christian anti-Semitism; for example, when, in 2 Corinthians, Paul says that the God of this world has blinded the Jews' eyes or when he suggests that Jews have fallen away.
 2. Feminists see Paul as the cause of sexism in Christianity. For example, in 1 Timothy, Paul is notorious for telling women to be silent in the assembly.
 3. Enlightenment thinkers blame Paul for Christianity's supernaturalism, superstition, hatred of sex, and authoritarianism.
 4. What is remarkable in our contemporary generation is that these criticisms of Paul, which originated among Christianity's detractors, have now become internal to Christian scholars and theologians themselves.
 5. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, one of the most phenomenal movements is that of the historical Jesus studies—the attempt to recover Jesus as he really was without the coloration of Christian doctrine and belief. Jesus is taken to be the measure of Christian life and morality in opposition to Paul, who seems much more problematic.
- III. Paul's significance continues to be debated for good reasons.
 - A. During his lifetime, Paul was at once a deeply ambiguous and a polarizing figure.

1. His mission was opposed by those who did not trust his motives or his credentials. He had been a persecutor of Christians; then he suddenly became a passionate and fanatical proselytizer for this movement, with no credentials except his own claim to an experience of Jesus. He was not a follower of Jesus during Jesus's lifetime, he was not one of the twelve chosen by Jesus, nor was he an original witness to the resurrection.
 2. His manner of dealing with churches and his motivations were often open to several interpretations. For example, Paul used women as agents, yet he said that women must be silent in the assembly and must be submissive to their husbands. He portrays himself as a fierce defender of the gentiles and resists the impetus to circumcise gentile converts, yet he himself was circumcised. Most of all, he was slippery in the use of money: He emphasized that he preached for free, but he did not tell the Corinthians that he was being supported by his Macedonian churches.
 3. His teaching tended to demand a choice between sharp alternatives; for example, flesh or spirit, law or grace, disobedience or faith.
 4. His own churches often preferred other leaders to Paul.
- B.** His letters continue to provide the basis for many different interpretations.
1. All the virtues celebrated by Paul's admirers are found in his letters: He is a champion of freedom, someone who demonstrates how the spirit can transform human life, a passionate poet of the divine.
 2. But equally present are the elements decried by Paul's critics: Reflecting the biases of his age, gender, and ethnicity, he had little use for gentiles who were not converted, he represented the androcentrism of his age, and he engaged in rhetorical hardball, using language that is much harder than we are used to today.
- C.** The "Protean Paul" resists all easy definition.
1. The evidence of the letters confounds reduction to any system.
 2. All interpreters approach Paul with an angle of vision that affects their reading.
- IV.** This course approaches Paul as a teacher of early Christian communities, whose "thought" is formed in response to real-life problems and is expressed through the rhetoric of individual literary compositions.
- A.** Other approaches are possible but more hazardous.
1. Paul can be analyzed psychologically as a "great man" of antiquity.
 2. Paul can be engaged theologically as a source for Christian doctrine.
- B.** We approach Paul as a pastor dealing with the problems of first-generation Christianity.
1. We begin by negotiating several critical questions concerning perspectives on Paul, then consider his career and correspondence as a whole.
 2. After sketching a range of issues that faced the first urban Christians with whom Paul dealt, we move through all thirteen letters, organizing our treatment as illustrations of the issues we have identified.
 3. We conclude by suggesting some of the ways in which Paul has influenced Christianity and the culture of the West.

Supplementary Reading:

W. A. Meeks, "The Christian Proteus," in Meeks, pp. 437–444.

Questions to Consider:

1. What basis can be found in Paul's letters for the contemporary perception of him as authoritarian, sexist, and anti-Semitic?
2. How does the negative evaluation of Paul as the "creator of Christianity" help explain the remarkable popularity of the search for the "historical Jesus"?

Lecture Two

How Should We Read Paul?

Scope: Any interpretation of Paul and his role in shaping the Christian religion must begin with decisions concerning three critical issues. All three concern the definition of the subject and the way into its investigation. The first is “personality or rhetoric?” Do we seek the psychology of Paul or an understanding of his letters? The second is “genius or tradition?” Is Paul the inventor of Christianity, or is he part of a larger movement; is he a transmitter of tradition or a creative thinker? The third issue, which concerns the sources for studying Paul, is “where is the real Paul?” This issue has two parts: Do we follow the Acts of the Apostles or his letters? And, among the letters attributed to Paul, which ones really come from him?

Outline

- I. Personality or rhetoric: Who is the I in Paul’s ego?
 - A. The dominant way of reading Paul’s letters is as a direct revelation of his personality: The style is the person.
 - B. Paul’s apparently outsized ego is the biggest hurdle for some readers.
 - C. Some even find Paul’s personality to be unhealthy.
 - 1. He is overly concerned for his authority and is suspicious of rivals.
 - 2. He has apparent mood swings, and the classic text of Romans 7 seems to reveal a divided, troubled self.
 - D. Psychological interpretations of Paul based on such clues in the letters abound.
 - 1. Paul is viewed as the “creative genius” who invented Christianity.
 - 2. Part of Paul’s “genius” is his erratic, if not sick, psyche.
 - 3. The “sickness” in Christianity is the result of the sickness in Paul.
 - E. Such analyses can be countered by other considerations.
 - 1. Paul does not really invent Christianity (see below).
 - 2. Psychology is a hazardous proposition when applied to ancient religious figures.
 - 3. In any case, Paul shows the signs of a healthy personality structure: He was capable of sustained relationships with people that extended over twenty years; he established communities and brought to completion large and worthwhile tasks over a period of twenty years.
 - F. In addition, concentration on Paul’s personality is mistaken.
 - 1. The most important insight of the last forty years has been the rediscovery of ancient Greek rhetoric and its application to Paul.
 - 2. Paul uses the conventions of ancient rhetoric deliberately as instruments of persuasion. One of the key conventions was the capacity to speak and write in character, so that one spoke and wrote in a manner appropriate to circumstances.
 - 3. Thus, the ego in Paul’s letters is a rhetorical ego.
 - G. We read his letters for argument, therefore, rather than for the revelation of personality.
- II. Genius or company man: Did Paul invent Christianity?
 - A. The question of whether Paul invented the Christian religion is stimulated by the perceived distance between him and Jesus.
 - 1. The Jesus of the Gospels is an itinerant rural preacher who proclaims the kingdom of God. He is not a cult figure, at least not in the synoptic gospels.
 - 2. In Paul’s letters, Jesus is the center of a “Christ cult” as the resurrected Lord.
 - B. Paul is better seen as standing in a broader stream of early Christianity.
 - 1. He was not alone as a missionary to the gentiles, and other early literature shows that Paul does not invent the Christ cult.
 - 2. His letters reveal multiple ways in which Paul uses earlier tradition, including baptism, the Lord’s Supper, the words of Jesus (although he does not quote Jesus often), and the story of Jesus.

- C. At the same time, Paul is a creative thinker.
 - 1. Paul demands of readers that they think with him, even though his premises and modes of argumentation are not always clear.
 - 2. It is fair to call Paul a *radical* thinker because of his tendency to establish polar oppositions (e.g., flesh and spirit) and to reconcile social separations (e.g., male and female).
- D. Paul, then, stands within a tradition, but is a creative interpreter of that tradition.

III. The problem of sources: Where do we find the real Paul?

- A. The sources used to reconstruct Paul's life and thought dramatically affect the resulting interpretation.
- B. For Paul's life, two basic sources exist, The Acts of the Apostles and his letters.
 - 1. The sources have areas of agreement and disagreement.
 - 2. A reconstruction of Paul's career must use both sources critically.
 - 3. The Acts of the Apostles is a primary, second-hand source; that is, it is written after Paul's life, probably from the 80s to 100.
- C. For Paul's thought, only his letters can serve as a source.
- D. Which of the thirteen letters attributed to Paul should be regarded as authentic?
 - 1. The authorship of at least six letters is challenged on the basis of style, placement in Paul's career, and consistency in theme.
 - 2. The conventional position is that seven letters come from Paul in his lifetime (Romans, Galatians, Philemon, Philippians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and 1 Thessalonians), three of them have some claim to authenticity (2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians), and three of them are certainly pseudonymous (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus).
 - 3. Problems exist with the current consensus and the arguments used to reach it.
 - 4. An alternative construal of Pauline authorship—namely that he may not have actually written all the letters (he may have used scribes), but did author all of them—enables a reading of all the letters as informative for Paul's place in early Christianity.

Supplementary Reading:

F. Nietzsche, *The First Christian* and *The Jewish Dysangelist*.

G. B. Shaw, *The Monstrous Imposition upon Jesus*.

A. Von Harnack, "The Founder of Christian Civilization," in Meeks, pp. 288–308.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What are the implications of regarding Paul as the "founder" of Christianity rather than Jesus?
- 2. Consider the different images of Paul that result from different selection of sources: Who is Paul if only Acts is read? If only Philmon and Philippians are used? If the image is constructed from the Corinthian correspondence?

Lecture Three

Paul's Life and Letters

Scope: By using all the available sources critically, we are able to reconstruct Paul's career, at least in its broad outlines: his early life with its intellectual and spiritual influences from Greco-Roman culture and Judaism; his own religious commitments as a member of the pharisaic movement; his persecution of the Christian sect; his pivotal experience that changed him into an apostle; his subsequent journeys and sojourns as a missionary and founder of churches. In this framework, it is also possible to locate some of his correspondence that now forms the main basis for our knowledge of Paul and describe the main literary features of his letters that are important for their interpretation: They are occasional, they are official, they are various in form and rhetorical type, and they result from a complex process of composition.

Outline

- I. Paul's background combined elements of a multicultural Mediterranean world of the first century of the common era, and these elements were given focus by his religious commitments.
 - A. As a Jew born in the diaspora (Tarsus of Cilicia—southwestern coast of Turkey), he was familiar with the commonplaces of Greco-Roman philosophy, religion, and especially, rhetoric; if Acts is correct, he also enjoyed the privileges of citizenship in the city of Rome.
 - B. Whether or not he was educated in Jerusalem (as Acts claims), his letters show the influence of distinctively Palestinian Jewish concerns.
 1. He is familiar with the modes of scriptural interpretation known as *midrash*.
 2. He shares that view of history known as apocalyptic. The apocalyptic worldview divides history into two periods. The first is an age in which the people of God are oppressed. In the second period, God will intervene to save his people.
 - C. His specific religious loyalty was to the Jewish law (Torah) as understood and practiced by the sect called the Pharisees (Philemon 3:5).
 1. Torah is the law of Moses, Prophets, and other writings of what Christians call the Old Testament, as well as the whole tradition of oral scriptural interpretation as carried out by the Pharisees.
 2. What is noteworthy is that Paul carries out these early interpretive practices on the Greek Septuagint, rather than the Hebraic text—a remarkable cultural fusion.
 3. Paul considered Torah to be observable in all its aspects by all Jews.
 4. He regarded Torah as the absolute norm for measuring human and divine righteousness.
 - D. Paul singles out one fact for special attention in his early life: He was a persecutor of the church (Philemon 3:6; Galatians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 15:9).
 1. He did so because of the Christian belief that an executed criminal—Jesus—was resurrected by God.
 2. Such a view was inconceivable to the Jews, who believed that criminals “hanged upon a tree” were cursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:23).
 3. For Paul, the unconverted Jew, Jesus was simply a criminal who was cursed by God.
- II. Paul's life changed direction because of an experience of the resurrected Jesus. (Paul, who never describes this event, is the only writer of the New Testament who claims that he saw the resurrected Jesus.)
 - A. Although Acts and Paul's own recollections differ in detail (see Acts 9:1–9, 22:3–16, 26:9–18; Galatians 1:11–17; 1 Corinthians 9:1, 15:8–11), they agree that Paul was changed from persecutor to apostle by an encounter with Jesus.
 1. This was not a religious conversion in the contemporary sense: Paul always thought of himself as a Jew throughout his life.
 2. Neither was it a moral conversion: Paul had no tortured conscience about his persecution of Christians, for example.
 - B. Psychological explanations make sense to us but at the expense of ignoring some of the evidence.
 1. We might see Paul's conversion as a sort of psychological breakdown: He had trouble keeping the Jewish law and in a classic hysteric reaction, he broke down.

2. No evidence suggests, however, that Paul experienced any cognitive dissonance before his experience.
- C. The view of Paul's conversion as a religious experience helps account for distinctive emphases in his letters.
1. He focuses on the risen Jesus and the importance of life "in Christ."
 2. He regards the "new age" as having begun with the resurrection.
 3. He regards Jesus not simply as a Jewish messiah but as a "New Adam," the start of a "new creation."
 4. The gentile mission is grounded in Jesus's resurrection as Lord of all humanity.
- III. Paul's subsequent life was spent as an apostle, founding and caring for communities in Asia Minor and Europe. Acts and Paul's letters disagree on some points concerning Paul's movements but agree on the basic pattern of his ministry.
- A. Acts portrays three great missionary journeys centering in Jerusalem; in the letters, Jerusalem is important to Paul, but there appear to be no discrete missionary journeys.
 - B. Acts offers a different sense of Paul's disputes involving the leadership of the Jerusalem church and gives a different chronology and purpose for Paul's collection.
 - C. The sources agree that Paul worked primarily among gentiles, traveled frequently, founded communities in large urban centers (for example, Philippi, Corinth, Antioch, Rome), worked with a team of co-workers and delegates, and was imprisoned several times (two of his imprisonments lasted up to two years each).
 - D. Acts provides an invaluable narrative framework that enables the placement of some of Paul's letters but never describes Paul as a correspondent.
 - E. Paul preferred to advise his ministries through personal visits to them. If such visits were not possible, he would send delegates. His letters to his communities were his least preferred approach.
- IV. Composed in the context of a highly active itinerant mission, four features of Paul's correspondence are noteworthy.
- A. His letters are occasional: They are written in response to real situations rather than as the vehicle for systematic theology.
 - B. His letters are official: They are not written for personal news or entertainment but as a message from an apostle to the "church of God" or his delegates in a certain place.
 - C. His letters are complex in composition: They make use of community traditions and are written with the help of secretaries and co-sponsors.
 - D. His letters are various: Although they share certain formal features, they differ in length, style, and rhetorical type.

Essential Reading:

Acts 7:54–8:3; 9:1–31; 11:19–30; 13:1–28:31.

Supplementary Reading:

L. T. Johnson, "Paul's Ministry and Letters," in Johnson, *Writings*, pp. 259–278.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does the portrait of Paul in Acts differ most dramatically from that drawn from his letters?
2. Paul is a classic example of a "charismatic person." What are the strengths and weaknesses of his reliance on his personal experience as the basis of his authority?

Lecture Four

Problems of Early Christianity

Scope: Paul wrote letters to communities and individuals when he could not visit them personally or communicate through a delegate. Because his letters respond to specific situations, they are irreplaceable sources of knowledge concerning the problems experienced among the first urban Christians. Many of these problems arose from the gap between the powerful religious experiences that brought such communities into existence and the ongoing social structures in which they lived. At the ideal level, Christians considered themselves to have overcome differences between Jew and gentile, male and female, slave and free. In reality, they struggled with greater or lesser success to realize this ideal in a stratified social order. Another set of problems arose from the failure of God's kingdom to be fully realized. Were they in the end-times or not? This lecture provides an overview of the issues that will be dealt with in the respective letters.

Outline

- I. Because Paul wrote to his communities or delegates in response to problems, they are a wonderful source of information about real-life Christian communities of the first generation.
 - A. Paul's letters were read out loud in the assembly; we can imagine the power of his letters being much more forceful when read aloud than when read silently.
 - B. The problems faced by Paul's communities tended to involve cognitive dissonance—the situation created when reality does not match up with expectations.
 - C. Paul's communities were freshly minted and did not have the sort of built-in stability that comes with a kinship system or legitimated institutions of society. When they experienced dissonance in their convictions and reality, it was much more threatening to their identity.
- II. Paul's readers have quite different conceptions of where they are in God's plan for history.
 - A. Paul and his readers share an apocalyptic framework that sees history as moving toward a climax, which will be God's visible victory in the world.
 - B. They share, as well, the experience of strong transforming power through the resurrection of Jesus.
 - C. But what is the connection between experience and expectation? The question is posed because of other experiences in the churches:
 1. If they are part of a new creation, why do the powers of the world still dominate?
 2. If they have conquered death, why do members of the community die?
 - D. Different conclusions are possible from such dissonance.
 1. Christ's resurrection applied only to him, and God's victory is still future.
 2. Christ's resurrection inaugurates the end-time, but the victory is spiritual.
 3. Christ's resurrection inaugurates God's victory that depends on personal transformation to be complete.
- III. Paul's readers struggle with identity boundaries, especially when, as the "saints," they are meant to be distinct both from pagans and from Jews.
 - A. The ideal is expressed by the baptismal formula Paul cites in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In the Christian *ekklesia* (assembly = church), differences that distinguish race, gender, and class in the world are meant to be leveled.
 - B. The reality is that the church struggles to realize this egalitarian ideal as it engages the resistance of cultural realities.
 - C. Is there really to be no difference between Jew and Greek? The issue here is both theoretical and practical.
 1. Theoretically, the issue addresses the relationship of the experience of Christ to Torah. Is the Law of Moses an absolute norm for all, or has it been nullified? Either choice has serious implications.
 2. Practically, the issue of Jew/gentile matters for practical life together, especially in the realm of dietary and sexual practice. Do we need uniform rules?

- D. Is there really no difference between male and female? Culturally inscribed gender differences are notoriously difficult to erase.
 - 1. Where the Holy Spirit moved women in the service of the *ekklesia*, Pauline Christians tended to ignore gender.
 - 2. But when the activities of the church intersected the patriarchal structures of the Hellenistic *oikos* (household), both Paul and his readers tended to get nervous and repressive.
- E. In the stratified Roman Empire, in which slavery was a fiercely defended “fact of nature,” can the *ekklesia* really eliminate the differences between slave and free?
 - 1. The problem is complicated, because the community contains members of both classes and because Jesus is identified early in the tradition as a “servant/slave of God.”
 - 2. Is the egalitarianism of the *ekklesia* to be one of attitude only, or is it to be expressed in structural reform?
- F. A polarity not found in Galatians 3:28, but also experienced as a tension, can be expressed as “neither rich nor poor.”
 - 1. Once more, the presence of the truly poor and the moderately wealthy in Pauline churches complicates the issue.
 - 2. How is a community to resolve an ideology that scorns wealth (“blessed are you poor”) yet needs the support of its wealthier members?

IV. Paul responds to these issues in certain characteristic ways.

- A. He is much more concerned about the stability and health of the community than about theoretical correctness; he privileges the communal over the individual.
- B. He respects a plurality of perception and practice without prescribing a universal norm, except when a fundamental principle is involved.
- C. He calls for boundaries that are moral, rather than spatial or ritual.
- D. The measure for moral behavior is what Paul calls “the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16). He wants members of this community to act in accordance with a new kind of consciousness, which is that found in Jesus Christ.
- E. Getting from “Christ’s mind” to practical decision making requires thinking.

Essential Reading:

1 Corinthians 6–11, Letter to Philemon.

Supplementary Reading:

G. Theissen, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:17–34,” in *Social Setting*, pp. 145–174.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. How do different interpretations of the “end-time” continue to divide Christians today and lead to different stances toward social involvement?
- 2. What does the gap between powerful religious experience and consistent norms for behavior suggest about the nature of early Christianity?

Lecture Five

First and Second Thessalonians

Scope: These letters represent the earliest extant Christian literature. Although some scholars contest the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians, the two letters are best read as stages of response by Paul to a single crisis in a local church concerning behavior in response to the expectation of the return of Jesus as the inauguration of the end-time. The letters show us the disparity of perspectives between Paul and his readers. In both letters, Paul is concerned primarily with the community's stability and its growth in the moral life. His readers, however, are preoccupied with where they might be in the eschatological timetable. Paul's first response merely incites further misunderstanding, which must be quelled by a second letter, one much sharper in tone than the first.

Outline

- I. Paul's two letters to the young church at Thessalonika, the capital city of Macedonia (today's Salonica), are of special interest.
 - A. They are the earliest datable extant Christian literature and show us the process of Christian identity formation within twenty years of the death of Jesus.
 - B. This lecture pays particular attention to these aspects of the letters:
 1. The way they reveal the situation of the community in Thessalonika;
 2. The way they show the distance between Paul's concerns and those of his readers;
 3. If both letters are authentic, the way they describe stages of a community crisis.
- II. Because of the overlap between Acts 16–18 and 1 Thessalonians, which recounts Paul's first visit to Thessalonika (2:1–16), we are unusually well informed about the situation that he addresses.
 - A. The sources agree that Paul arrived there from Philippi, stayed only a short time, and had sent delegates from Athens to inquire about the community. They also agree that the community experienced some form of affliction. The main disagreement concerns the ethnic makeup of the church. The evidence of 1 Thessalonians is to be preferred: This is a gentile church (1:9–10).
 - B. Paul, therefore, writes to a young, immature church that lost its leader after a very short time and now faces a crisis somehow connected to "affliction" (1 Thessalonians 1:6).
 - C. 1 Thessalonians is universally accepted as authentic. It shows Paul's customary pastoral pattern. He prefers to visit in person; if he cannot, he sends delegates; when all else fails, he writes a letter (see 1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:10).
 1. 1 Thessalonians has the typical formal features of Paul's letters: greetings, thanksgiving, body, farewell, and final prayer.
 2. It also has rhetorical features resembling the Greek *paraenetic* discourse.
 - D. Although many challenge the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians, no sound reason supports this judgment: The style is close to that of the first letter, and it is signed by Paul (2 Thessalonians 3:17). The apparent discrepancy in Paul's discussion of the end-time can best be interpreted in terms of a response to a deepening crisis that his own first letter helped create.
- III. The letters show the different concerns of Paul and his readers, with their distinct perspectives giving rise to further misunderstandings between Paul and his churches.
 - A. Paul's concern is for community stability and integrity, expressed by the term "edification" (see 1 Thessalonians 5:11).
 1. He wants the people to respond to their call from God with a distinctive way of life, a form of holiness (4:1–3).
 2. He is impressed by their faith (1:8) and by their love (4:9). It is the condition of their hope that worries him. Their grieving "like those without hope" (4:13) at the death of their loved ones threatens the integrity of a community based on the power of the living God to raise the dead to life (1:10).
 - B. The Thessalonians' concern is for their "salvation," that is, their share in God's cosmic victory.

1. Paul had told them that they awaited Jesus, “who rescues us from the wrath that is coming” (1 Thessalonians 1:10).
2. But if people are dying before Jesus’s return in triumph, they have missed out on God’s victory, and grieving is appropriate, because these people are indeed lost.

IV. Reading 1 and 2 Thessalonians in sequence, we can see them as describing stages in the community’s eschatological crisis. (The Thessalonians subscribed to an apocalyptic understanding of history.)

- A. Stage one is Paul’s perception of them as lacking hope because their loved ones have died. In his view, they are confused about the end-time: They so emphasize the “not yet,” that they neglect the “already” of God’s victory in Jesus that can now transform their lives.
- B. Stage two is Paul’s correction of their perception. He reminds them of the resurrection (5:9–10), reassures them with an apocalyptic scenario that even the dead will share in God’s victory (4:13–18), and warns them that the end-time will come suddenly and without warning (5:1–3).
 1. He uses two striking images to describe the end-time, which he says will come “like a thief in the night” and is akin to “labor pains.”
 2. He therefore wants the people to be “watchful” (5:4–8), by which he means pay attention to their moral lives.
 3. Unfortunately Paul’s description of the end-time does the exact opposite of reassuring his Thessalonian community.
- C. Stage three is the panic that comes on the community, described in 2 Thessalonians. Partly because of an increase in persecution (2 Thessalonians 1:4–5) and partly through misunderstanding Paul’s advice, the community has been thrown in an uproar because of a prophetic declaration that the day of the Lord had arrived (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3). As a result, people had stopped working (3:11) and the community life was threatened.
- D. Stage four is Paul’s response in 2 Thessalonians: He reassures the people about the end-time—its appearance will be obvious, and they should not identify local trouble with cosmic birth-pangs (2 Thessalonians 2:3–12). He wants them to pay attention to their common life (3:1–5). He commands his readers to shun those who will not resume normal activities (3:1–5).

Essential Reading:

First and Second Thessalonians.

Supplementary Reading:

A. J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Thessalonians*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does Paul’s response in 1 and 2 Thessalonians reveal something of his pastoral style?
2. How would a different conclusion concerning the authenticity of 2 Thessalonians affect the reading of the literature given by this lecture?

Lecture Six

Life in the World: First Corinthians

Scope: More than any of his other letters, Paul's correspondence to the Corinthian church, which was considerably larger than the two extant letters, reveals the real-life problems of a local church and, in Paul's responses, also shows Paul's self-understanding as an apostle. The first letter leads us into the tangled interactions between Paul and the Corinthians, the development of tensions and even rival groups in the church, and Paul's efforts to sort out what is involved by belonging to "the saints" while also living in "the world." The Corinthians cannot agree on much of anything, whether the topic is food or sex or who gets to speak in the assembly. Paul tries to get them thinking less about their rights than about living in right relationship according to what he terms "the mind of Christ."

Outline

- I. Paul's relations with the church he founded in Corinth (Acts 18:1–11) extended over a substantial period of time at the height of his Aegean ministry and involved frequent exchanges of several sorts.
 - A. In addition to his first stay of eighteen months, Paul visited the community at least two other times, not necessarily successfully. We don't have a record of those meetings.
 - B. Delegates (such as Timothy and Titus) were sent by Paul to the church (1 Corinthians 4:17, 16:10–12; 2 Corinthians 8:16–18), and the Corinthians themselves also sent delegates (like the servants of Chloe; 1 Corinthians 1:11). We can only guess at the nature of these exchanges.
 - C. The correspondence between the church and its founder contained more letters than we now possess.
 1. Paul wrote a first letter, warning against associating with sinners in the community (see 1 Corinthians 5:9).
 2. The Corinthians (or some of them) wrote asking Paul's advice on moral matters (see 1 Corinthians 7:1).
 3. Paul responds with our current 1 Corinthians (extant).
 4. Paul writes a letter of rebuke "in tears" (2 Corinthians 2:4).
 5. Paul writes 2 Corinthians (extant), which some scholars think is actually an edited version of several separate notes (see next lecture).
 - D. Because we have only a portion of these complex exchanges, our speculations concerning historical events must be cautious, especially given then, in every instance, we have only Paul's perceptions.
- II. By paying attention to the dialogical character of 1 Corinthians, we are able to reconstruct with some plausibility the sequence of events leading to the writing of 1 Corinthians and, thereby, grasp the outline of a letter that otherwise seems to lack coherence.
 - A. The Corinthian Christians enjoy powerful religious experiences but cannot agree among themselves concerning the way these experiences should translate into behavior.
 1. Some of these have to do with the way the "saints" relate to the "world" in matters of diet and association (including sexual).
 2. Others concern the ways in which community worship has proven divisive because of abuses at the Lord's Supper and a misplaced privileging of spectacular spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*).
 - B. Some in the community want to write to Paul, seeking his advice.
 1. They want Paul to tell them who, among the diversity of strong personalities in their community, holds the right viewpoint.
 2. This suggestion reveals deeper divisions, having to do with perceptions about leaders (1 Corinthians 1:10).
 3. Some members in the Corinthian community are unhappy with Paul's leadership and want to select a different leader.
 - C. Members of Chloe's household (probably delivering the letter) report to Paul in Ephesus that further community disintegration has taken place, including members suing each other in pagan courts.

- D.** The outline of 1 Corinthians corresponds to Paul's rhetorical challenge.
1. Paul must first establish his credentials as the teacher to whom they should listen while altering their perceptions concerning the nature of the church itself (chs. 1–4).
 2. He begins by reminding the Corinthians that they are not members of his community, or Peter's community, or Apollos's community; they are not members of a club, but rather, they are God's church.
 3. He also reminds them that most of them are of humble origin; furthermore, they came into their community through a message concerning a crucified messiah—someone who was executed as a criminal.
 4. He points out the paradox of their situation—God has worked through weakness to give them strength.
 5. He also demonstrates that he and Apollos are not rivals but colleagues—he (Paul) planted, Apollos watered, but God gives the growth.
 6. He reminds his community that each member has a valid function and that cooperation is the key to the welfare of the community.
 7. He concludes by reminding them that he is their father.
 8. He then engages in social engineering and rapid-fire corrections of the most egregious abuses reported to him (chs. 5–6).
 9. Next, he considers the questions in their letter, taking up in turn the issues of marriage and virginity (7), eating practices (8–10), and problems in worship (11–14).
 10. He then provides a theological framework for his teaching in an instruction concerning the resurrection (ch. 15). Here, Paul is speaking of the end-time. He stresses that a moral transformation in the community's behavior must take place before the members can be part of God's final victory.
 11. Finally, he turns to his personal concern, the plans for his collection of money for the Jerusalem church (ch. 16).

III. How the experience of the Holy Spirit should yield behavioral norms was not clear to the Corinthians.

- A.** The struggle that Paul and the Corinthians face on this point reveals two significant things about nascent Christianity.
1. It did have powerful experiences that drew people into a fellowship.
 2. It did not, from the beginning, have a complete set of moral guidelines.
- B.** The two basic positions can be called, following Paul's suggestion, that of the "strong" and that of the "weak."
1. We would call the strong "liberals." They emphasized interior transformation through knowledge and deprecated the importance of the body and community. Confident that their true identity was secure, they did not think what they ate was important or with whom they ate or even with whom they mated. They are *laissez-faire*.
 2. The "weak" can legitimately be called "conservatives." They think identity is weak and threatened. They take seriously the implications of body and society. They want general rules in matters of food and drink and sexuality.
- C.** Such deep ideological differences, when combined with personal politics, threatened the stability of the community and even its ability to function as a community of moral discernment.

IV. Paul's response is remarkable for its complexity and subtlety; he seeks a way for both sides to gain a plane of higher moral perception.

- A.** In some respects, he agrees with the strong. Paul agrees that their identity is strong, but he disagrees about the basis of that strength: It is not because their identity is mental, but rather because God has gifted them and God is faithful. In other respects, he agrees with the weak. He agrees that identity is not simply a personal matter but is also a corporate matter, involving one's body and the community. He calls for moral transformation.
- B.** He thinks both sides are wrong in seeking to be "right" at the cost of true righteousness.
- C.** He calls them to live according to the self-emptying pattern found in the death of Jesus. They have "the mind of Christ" (2:16).

- D. This pattern is one by which all members of the community seek to build up the whole community rather than themselves as individuals (8:1, 14:4, 26). For Paul, the community is a living organism in which the health and life of each part of the organism depends on the life and health of the whole organism (12:12–31).

Essential Reading:

First Corinthians.

Supplementary Reading:

N. A. Dahl, “Paul and the Church in Corinth According to 1 Corinthians 1:10–4:21,” in *Studies in Paul*, pp. 62–69.

A. Wire, “Spiritual Women Speak for God and to God: 1 Corinthians 12–14,” in *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, pp. 135–158.

Questions to Consider:

1. Analyzing Paul’s perceptions of the “strong and weak” in terms of the categories “liberal and conservative” represents a risk-filled modernization; what are the risks and benefits of such translation?
2. How well does 1 Corinthians support the picture of an idyllic, perfectly unified, primitive Christianity?

Lecture Seven

Life in Christ: Second Corinthians

Scope: Paul's second letter to the Corinthians presents readers with a number of critical issues. Is it a single letter or an edited composite made up of several notes written by Paul to the Corinthian church? What happened after the writing of 1 Corinthians, and how do theories of composition affect the way that history is reconstructed? One thing is clear: Paul's relationship with the Corinthians is in trouble. They suspect Paul and prefer other teachers. Despite the literary and historical difficulties it presents, this letter contains some of Paul's most personal, painful, and profound reflections on the meaning of ministry, which he sees as a process of self-emptying for the sake of others. Paul sees Jesus as the model for such a reconciling way of life, and he calls on the Corinthians to imitate that pattern in their own behavior, as he encourages them to join in the great collection he is taking up for the Jerusalem church.

Outline

- I. Second Corinthians continues Paul's complex correspondence with the church that he founded and with which he had such difficult relations. It is among the most difficult of Paul's letters to read, not only because of the critical difficulties we discuss, but also because of the density and power of its language, forged in a context of anguish.
- II. All scholars consider 2 Corinthians to be an authentic letter, indeed, one of the four "great letters" (1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians). The critical question concerns its literary integrity: Is 2 Corinthians one letter or several stitched together?
 - A. The letter is unquestionably difficult to read in a straight line from end to end.
 - 1. The movements of Paul and his delegates are not easy to disentangle (see 1:15; 2:1, 12–13; 12:14).
 - 2. Paul's reference to a letter "written in tears" (2:4) is obscure.
 - B. Some scholars also detect literary "seams" that they think indicate separate sources clumsily joined together:
 - 1. The apparent shift in mood from chapter nine to chapter ten;
 - 2. The apparent interpolation in 6:14–7:1;
 - 3. The apparent double treatment of the collection in chapters 8–9.
 - C. The dominant hypothesis today is that 2 Corinthians is an edited composite of notes written by Paul to the Corinthian church. It comprises:
 - 1. An irenic letter of reconciliation (1–7);
 - 2. An interpolated fragment (6:14–7:1) that may be Paul's "lost letter" (see 1 Corinthians 5:9);
 - 3. An angry polemic against rival teachers, perhaps written "in tears" (8–10);
 - 4. Two notes concerning the collection (chs. 8 and 9).
 - D. It is possible, while recognizing the difficulties, also to read the "literary seams" as rhetorical shifts rather than indicators of prior sources and to understand 2 Corinthians as a single, if demanding, literary composition.
- III. Paul faces a situation in which, at the very moment that he seeks to reconcile Jew and gentile churches through a symbolic collection of money from gentile churches for the "saints in Jerusalem," he finds that his major gentile community wants nothing to do with him.
 - A. We see indications that Paul's mission to the gentiles was resented by some Jewish Christians.
 - 1. Because of profound cultural differences, deep-seated ethnic rivalries existed between Jew and gentile in Paul's time.
 - 2. Anti-Semitism was a reality of the Greco-Roman world.
 - 3. This situation of ethnic dissonance concerned Paul, because it did not fit with Paul's view of God's work as reconciling all humans.
 - B. The importance of this collection is indicated by Paul's frequent references to it and the elaborate plans he sketches for its accomplishment.

1. The collection formed the centerpiece of the agreement he had struck with the Jerusalem leaders (Galatians 2:10)—if Jerusalem recognized the legitimacy of Paul’s mission, Paul would help the Jerusalem community with donations from his gentile communities.
 2. He lays out plans for the collection in 1 Corinthians 16:1–4.
 3. He spends chapters 8 and 9 in this letter urging the Corinthians not to embarrass him by reneging on their pledge.
 4. He indicates at the end of Romans (15:25–32) that the collection forms the capstone of his ministry in the East.
- C. Second Corinthians offers some clues about why the Corinthians are alienated from Paul.
1. They resent his rebuke of one of their members in the “letter of tears.”
 2. They think that Paul is unreliable and possibly even fraudulent in his dealings with money (11:7–11; 12:16–18). (Paul had emphasized that he preached for free, but he did not tell the Corinthians that the Philippian church was financing him on the side. The Corinthians then suspected that his collection might be fraudulent.)
 3. They prefer rival apostles whose powerful deeds are accompanied by a straightforward, “pay-up-front” approach (11:5–23).
- D. The deep paradox of Paul’s situation is that to carry out his cosmic ministry of reconciliation, he must first reconcile with his own community.
- IV. Paul responds to the crisis with a rhetoric that focuses not on rational proof but on appeal to character—what ancient rhetoricians called an *ethos* argument.
- A. The three major sections of the letter develop different aspects of a defense of his ministry.
1. In chapters 1–7, the ministry of reconciliation is positively defined.
 2. In chapters 10–12, the ministry of reconciliation is negatively defined by contrast to the rival teachers.
 3. In chapters 8–9, the ministry of reconciliation is given practical embodiment through the collection. (By donating to the Jerusalem church, the community members will be following Christ’s ministry of reconciliation.)
- B. Throughout the letter, Paul interweaves the story of Jesus (the character of Jesus) and Paul’s ministry of reconciliation.
1. Jesus accomplishes reconciliation between humans and God by a pattern of existence that is self-emptying (5:14–21; 12:4).
 2. In his work of ministry, Paul tries to follow that same pattern by emphasizing his weakness rather than his strength (4:5–12; 10:17–11:33).
 3. He invites the Corinthians to share the reconciling work of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem by imitating the same model of Jesus as the one who “though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Essential Reading:

Second Corinthians.

Supplementary Reading:

R. Hock, “Tentmaking and Apostleship: The Debate at Corinth,” in *Social Context*, pp. 50–65.

D. Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What does Paul’s fund-raising activity suggest about his attitude toward the Jerusalem leadership and Jewish Christianity?
2. Does Paul’s appeal to a “servant style” of leadership make sense apart from his conviction concerning God’s power revealed through a crucified messiah?

Lecture Eight

Life and Law: Galatians

Scope: One of the fundamental issues facing the first Christians—the connection between Christ and the law of Moses—surfaces with particular sharpness in Galatians. Some members of this gentile church are seeking circumcision as a sign of full membership among God’s people. Paul’s response is at once passionate and rigorously argued. He tries to convince his community members that a ritual they regard as a step forward really represents a denial of the gift of power they received when they believed in the good news about Jesus that he had proclaimed to them. To live by the law as absolute norm means a form of slavery and death. They have been freed from law. But then, by what measure should they live? Paul sketches a vision of life empowered by God’s spirit and shaped by the pattern of Jesus’s faith and love.

Outline

- I. Paul’s letter to the churches in Galatia (a territory/province in present-day Turkey) shows him at his boldest and most embattled as he defends his gentile mission. Galatians is also one of Paul’s letters that had the greatest influence on Christian theology in the West, especially through its use by Augustine and Luther.
 - A. Paul has much personally at stake, and his language is correspondingly emotional.
 - B. He is also personally involved, to a degree not seen in other letters, in Christ mysticism—his deep, personal identification with Jesus.
 - C. This letter (3:6–18) reveals Paul’s command of *midrash*, the close textual analysis of Torah carried out in rabbinic schools.
- II. We can know the situation in Galatia only through Paul’s perceptions as these are incidentally recorded in the letter; many things, therefore, remain obscure (e.g., where exactly were these churches, were there outside agitators, and what was their identity?). We are not even able to date the letter with any certainty.
 - A. It is certain that Paul was the founder of this church and that it was made up largely, if not exclusively, of gentiles (4:8–20).
 1. The members came to believe by responding to the message about the crucified messiah, Jesus (3:1–2).
 2. They experienced the powerful and transforming presence of the Holy Spirit (3:3–5).
 - B. After Paul’s departure, some in the churches (whether urged by outsiders or not) advocated the practice of circumcision as a sign of fuller participation in the people of Torah (5:2, 12; 6:12–13).
 1. Throughout the letter, circumcision is synecdoche for being a law-observant Jew.
 2. The suggestion has some logic: Multiple initiations were common in antiquity, and Paul himself was a circumcised Jew. Why shouldn’t the church members have what he did?
 3. In Judaism, circumcision symbolizes the “yoke of Torah” that is envisaged as freedom. The male Jew is, therefore, the fully mature human. He is not female, he is not gentile, he is not a slave.
 - C. It appears that some are in the process of undergoing this painful ritual act (5:2). Religiously, this behavior can be understood as the desire to “do more”; sociologically, it can be understood as seeking higher status in the group.
- III. Paul perceives the church members’ desire for something more as a betrayal of what they have already been given and a willing submission to a kind of slavery and death (5:2–6).
 - A. Seeking circumcision challenges the adequacy of baptism “into Christ” as a way of becoming “children of God” (3:12–4:7).
 1. Is Jesus only a Jewish messiah, a threshold for gentile entrance into Jewish identity?
 2. Or is Jesus the “Son of God” who makes the power and presence of God available to all peoples?
 - B. Seeking to come under the yoke of Torah challenges the ultimate nature of God’s revelation through the crucified and raised messiah, Jesus.
 1. If Torah is the absolute norm for righteousness, then Jesus cannot be the source of life, because Deuteronomy 21:23 curses those “who hang upon a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

2. A very important dispute among scholars today concerns the translation of the Greek phrase *pistis Christou*. Virtually all traditional translations mistranslate this phrase as “Christians’ faith in Christ”—meaning that *their* faith is what puts them in right relationship with God.
 3. A growing minority of scholars today argues that the correct translation should be “Christ’s faith”—meaning that the faith of the human person Jesus in God puts all people, including both Christians and Jews, in right relationship with God.
 4. But if Jesus, in his human response of fidelity and love (1:4; 2:20), is the ultimate revelation of God’s righteousness, then Torah must become a relative, rather than ultimate, norm.
- C. Seeking higher status through circumcision challenges the egalitarian character of the church.
1. In baptism, church members became “children of God” in Christ, with neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free” (Galatians 3:28).
 2. But circumcision would make “Jew” greater than “Greek” and would certainly also make “male” greater than “female.”
- IV. Paul’s argument is “radical,” because it decisively takes its stand on religious experience rather than on scriptural precedent.
- A. His long autobiographical statement (1:11–2:14) is not, as is sometimes thought, a defense of his apostleship. Its rhetorical function is exemplary. He wants the community members to learn from his experience.
1. In his former life, he was the perfect Jew, yet he persecuted the church (1:13–14).
 2. He experienced the resurrected Jesus and, on the basis of that experience, became an apostle (1:11–12; 15–17).
 3. He held to that experience even when it was challenged by “false brethren” who sought to impose circumcision on his gentile co-worker (Titus 2:1–10).
 4. He stood up to Peter and the “Men from James” in Antioch in defense of common table fellowship between Jews and gentiles (2:11–21).
 5. The point? The Galatians, too, should stick by their experience of Jesus and not be swayed.
- B. The second element in Paul’s argument is his reminder to the Galatians of their own experience (3:1–5).
1. Before they had ever heard of the law, they had experienced the powerful work of God through their faith in the crucified messiah.
 2. To submit to circumcision because it promised “freedom” would be similar to a person who breathes perfectly well climbing inside a respirator because of the claim that it “helps you breathe”: The result is slavery and even death.
- C. The third element in Paul’s argument is a complex reinterpretation of Torah from the perspective of faith (3:6–28; 4:21–31).
1. Those who have faith are the real children of Abraham, who was declared righteous because of his faith.
 2. The law revealed through Moses is secondary and temporary, with a limited function.
- V. Having declared freedom from the Mosaic law (5:1) for gentiles, Paul must then establish a new norm for human righteousness if freedom is not to become simply “an opportunity for self-indulgence” (5:13).
- A. The new guide to life is provided by the power of the Holy Spirit that has come from Jesus. If the church members “live” by this spirit, they can also “walk by” this spirit (5:25).
- B. The Spirit transforms them internally, so that instead of having antisocial attitudes and practices, they show that which seeks the good of others (5:13–26).
- C. The model for this is the pattern of Jesus, who “loved us and gave himself for us”; thus, Paul says, “bear one another’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (6:2).

Essential Reading:

Galatians.

Supplementary Reading:

J. Munck, “The Judaizing Gentile Christians,” in *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*, pp. 87–134.

R. B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How critical is the fact that Paul is dealing with gentile Christians in Galatia? Can his argument concerning Torah be considered anti-Judaic? In what sense?
2. Paul's scriptural argument in Galatians 4–4 would not meet the agreement of a fellow Pharisee, even though the technical means of argumentation are the same. How would their distinct premises lead to different readings of Torah?

Lecture Nine

Life and Righteousness: Romans

Scope: The themes that Paul argued polemically in Galatians are placed in a magisterial argument concerning God's ways with the world in his letter to the Romans. Everyone agrees that Romans is especially important for understanding Paul's theology. In contrast to the letters that respond to local problems, Romans presents an orderly exposition of the "good news" proclaimed by the apostle. Paul is basically writing to seek support from the Roman church (with which he has never met) for a future mission to Spain. He takes the occasion to recommend his understanding of the Gospel so that the Romans will provide financial backing for this new venture. In the process, Paul composes a theological masterpiece that, more than any other New Testament writing, affected the course of theology in the Western church.

Outline

- I. Romans is universally regarded as the centerpiece in the Pauline collection, and it has had a great influence on theology in the Western church. It is one of the two longest sustained arguments in the New Testament (the other is Hebrews) and is presented in a more systematic fashion than the other letters.
 - A. Romans, however, was not written as "Scripture" for posterity; like other Pauline letters, it responded to a real-life situation and should be read first in that context.
 - B. Romans is best read as a letter composed at a turning point in Paul's career.
 1. He has finished his work in the East (15:16–22).
 2. He is on his way to Jerusalem with the collection (15:22–32).
 3. He seeks support from Rome for a mission to Spain (15:24).
 4. He is sending Phoebe as his financial representative to gather such support (16:1–2).
 - C. As a means of persuasion to assist in his next endeavor, Paul's self-recommendation (or recommendation of his gospel) naturally develops themes of his recent work in the East, especially in Corinth and Galatia.
- II. The Romans debate: Why did Paul write to the Romans?
 - A. Some evidence in the letter suggests real differences between Jewish and gentile Christians in the Roman churches (2:1–3:9; 14:1–23; 16:17–20). On this basis, some scholars propose that Romans should be read as other Pauline letters, as an "occasional" missive intended to correct dissension (see, above all, ch. 14).
 - B. Other scholars recognize that evidence but regard it as typical of diversity within communities rather than the specific problems of the Roman church (which Paul neither founded nor knew personally). They see Paul speaking of diversity in practice (ch. 14) as a way of giving practical expression to his understanding of righteousness.
- III. The structure of the letter has been variously understood by scholars throughout the ages. Readers in different periods have focused on different parts of the letter.
 - A. In the Middle Ages, scholastic commentators divided the letter neatly between "doctrine" (chs. 1–11) and "ethics" (chs. 12–16), because they regarded Romans as a form of systematic theology. Romans does not, however, contain all of Paul's theology. It does not represent a systematic theology of that sort.
 - B. Such reformers as Martin Luther focused on chapters 1–8, because they contain Paul's most explicit teaching on justification by faith.
 - C. Calvin focused on chapters 9–11, because they contain Paul's teaching on divine predestination.
 - D. Calvin was very concerned with the question of eternal predestination of the individual.
 - E. But Paul is not talking about the fate of the individual. He is discussing the relationship between nations (gentiles and Jews), historically, in working out God's plan.
 - F. The contemporary recovery of classical rhetoric has helped scholars see all of Romans as a single rhetorical argument with each section of the letter serving a different function.
 1. Romans can be read as a "scholastic diatribe," which means that it not only has those dialogical stylistic features associated with the diatribe (rhetorical questions, apostrophe, abrupt responses) but also a dialectical mode of argument.

2. Thus, after the greeting and thanksgiving, Paul states his thesis in 1:16–17 (“...the righteous person will live out of faith”).
 3. He argues this thesis by means of its antithesis in 1:18–3:20, showing how the wrath of God is being revealed among humans by the opposite of faith, namely, sin.
 4. He restates the thesis more fully in 3:21–31, showing how it is the faith of Jesus that saves humans.
 5. He then demonstrates the thesis through the scriptural example of Abraham as the person who models faith in 4:1–25.
 6. He finishes his argument through appeal to experience in 5:1–21, before responding to a series of questions raised by the thesis in 6:1–11:31. Essentially, the question is, “If the gentiles have this good news and Jews are turning away from it, does this mean that God has failed?”
 7. Finally, Paul applies the argument to the moral life of the Roman community as exemplary for every community in 12:1–15:6.
- G.** The importance of understanding this structure is that it gives us clues as to how to read parts of Romans.
1. People today are obsessed by the fact that Paul seems to condemn homosexuality in chapter 1. But Paul uses homosexuality merely as an illustration of a larger issue, rather than a considered analysis of an issue.
 2. Likewise, chapter 7 is taken as an indication of Paul’s divided consciousness (he says he wants to obey the law but cannot do what the law says).
 3. When we understand the structure of the diatribe, we see that Paul is exercising the rhetorical device of writing in character.
- H.** So where is Paul? Paul is in chapter 8, where he says that because we have been empowered by the spirit, we can do what the law asks of us.
- I.** Context is, therefore, crucial to our understanding of Paul.
1. Thus, chapters 9–11 are not about heaven and hell but about the fundamental issues of whether God plays fair and is faithful to his promises in history.
 2. Paul’s position in the beginning of chapter 9 is far from being anti-Semitic; rather, he basically says that if the Jews are lost, then he wants to be cut off too, because he is a Jew.
 3. He ends by saying that God’s final plan is for all Israel to be saved.
- IV.** In all the complexity of Paul’s scriptural interpretation, he develops an elegant and powerful argument based in the story of Jesus.
- A.** The fundamental theological principle Paul argues is that of God’s “impartiality,” or fairness (2:11; 3:22; 11:34–35).
1. For Paul, it is axiomatic that “God is One” (3:27–30).
 2. If God is one and God is “righteous” (in our terms, “plays fair”), then there must be some way for all humans to be righteous (i.e., in right relationship with God, 3:29–31).
- B.** It is the response of faith (*pistis*—meaning trust, obedience, and responsiveness) that establishes humans in right relationship, as shown by Abraham’s faith in God even when he was still a gentile (4:1–11).
1. But there is a problem: Human sin has inhibited the possibility of obedient, trusting faith (1:18–3:20).
 2. The Mosaic Law cannot help, because it is only verbal, whereas the power of sin is internal (7:1–25).
- C.** God has gifted humans with the power to respond with faith through the faithful obedience of God’s son, Jesus (1:16–17; 3:21–26).
1. Jesus’s faithful obedience places humans in right relationship with God (5:12–21).
 2. The power to respond with faith as Jesus did is given by the Holy Spirit (5:1–11; 8:1–39).
- D.** God’s plan in history is to reconcile Jews and gentiles through the principle of faith (9:1–11:36).
- E.** Christians can act among themselves with righteousness by transforming their minds (12:1–2) and “putting on the Lord Jesus” (13:14).
1. They demonstrate this transformed mind by the quality of their lives (12:1–21).
 2. Above all, they demonstrate it by the mutual love that respects and welcomes diversity in the community (14:1–15:13).

Essential Reading:

Romans.

Supplementary Reading:

A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*.

K. Stendahl, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*, pp. 78–96.

L. T. Johnson, *Romans 3:21–26 and the Faith of Jesus*.

Questions to Consider:

1. How does Romans 9–11 throw light on Paul's attitudes toward his fellow Jews?
2. What difference does it make to translate the phrase *pistis christou* as "faith of Christ" rather than "faith in Christ?"

Lecture Ten

Fellowship: Letters from Captivity

Scope: At least four of Paul's letters (Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians) were written while Paul was in prison. Determining which of Paul's several imprisonments might have generated the letters is one problem attached to them; another is deciding which ones are authentic and which might have been written by a follower after Paul's death. Taken as a group, however, the letters are connected thematically by a concern for fellowship in communities, especially when disparities in social standing or human competitiveness threaten to destroy an ideal of equality and unity in Christ. The Letter to the Ephesians stands as the best expression of these concerns and the most mature reflection in the Pauline tradition on the meaning of the church.

Outline

- I. From the fact that a substantial part of Paul's correspondence was written from prison, we learn something important about him.
 - A. We learn that being a first-generation Christian was dangerous and that Paul was sufficiently an irritant to come to the attention of those in a position to imprison him.
 - B. We learn that Paul's fidelity to his call and his devotion to his churches were capable of surviving the hardships of frequent captivity.
- II. Any consideration of the captivity letters must take account of two critical issues, neither of which has been resolved to universal satisfaction.
 - A. The lesser issue is the question of where Paul was imprisoned when he wrote the letters. It is lesser because it affects the chronology of the correspondence but not its meaning.
 1. Acts and the letters indicate a number of Pauline imprisonments.
 2. The two most likely candidates for the location of the correspondence are Maritime Caesarea (in Palestine) and Rome. In each place, Paul spent two years in captivity (Acts 24:27; 28:30).
 3. A popular alternative option is Ephesus, although its main appeal is convenience (see 1 Corinthians 15:32; 2 Corinthians 1:8)—it is much closer to the people he is writing to.
 4. Sources indicate that Paul was under house arrest but able to receive visitors and write correspondence.
 - B. The greater issue is that of authenticity: Several of these letters are considered by a majority of scholars to have been written by members of a Pauline school after his death.
 1. Philippians and Philemon are universally regarded as authentic.
 2. Some scholars consider Colossians authentic, but the majority do not.
 3. A greater majority think Ephesians to be pseudonymous (written in Paul's name after his death).
 4. Technically, 2 Timothy is also a captivity letter, although it is generally treated with the other two Pastoral letters and is considered by the substantial majority of scholars to be inauthentic.
 - C. An alternative construal takes Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians as a three-letter packet, *authored, if not actually written*, by Paul to the Christians of the Lycus Valley and other points in Asia Minor during his lifetime.
 1. This hypothesis emphasizes the connecting links between the three letters: their language, themes, and the network of names found in each. It attributes the differences among them to three different functions.
 2. This hypothesis views Philemon as a letter of commendation for the runaway slave Onesimus, who is being returned to his owner, Philemon, by Paul's delegate, Tychichus. Colossians is one of several letters to local churches delivered by Tychichus, who also circulates Ephesians, a general epistle to the Pauline churches of Asia Minor.
- III. Taken as a group, the captivity letters share some broad characteristics.
 - A. In tone, they are calmer and more detached, and Paul seems much less concerned about his authority. The "Paul" of these letters has a gentleness even in the face of difficulties.

- B. He shows himself to be much more concerned with overall moral attitudes than with specific practical concerns.
 - C. He constructs his arguments more on the basis of shared traditions (especially connected to baptism) than on the interpretation of Torah.
 - D. In some fashion, each letter defends a vision of the church as a community of reconciliation and equality of status, in the face of social disparities (Jew/gentile, slave/free, male/female) and attitudes of competition and rivalry.
 - E. Each emphasizes the ultimate nature of Christ as the power and pattern of life together in fellowship.
- IV. Whether it is written by Paul or a follower, Ephesians is recognized by all scholars as a magisterial statement on the church that is thoroughly Pauline in character.
- A. Ephesians announces God's plan as one of reconciling all things in Christ (1:3–23).
 - B. It portrays the cosmic alienation of humans from God in terms of the sociopolitical and religious alienation between Jews and gentiles (2:1–12).
 - C. The reconciliation of humans and God is, therefore, represented in the church by the reconciliation of Jew and gentile (2:13–22).
 - D. The mission of the church, in this vision, is to be a symbol of the world's possibility (3:10–11). The church is to be the place where God's plan for the reconciliation of all things is first realized and, thereby, revealed to the world (4:1–5:20).

Essential Reading:

Philemon, Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians.

Supplementary Reading:

L. T. Johnson, *Writings*, pp. 369–421.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why does Paul consider individualism (expressed through rivalry and competition) to be so destructive of the church?
2. How does contemporary Christianity match Paul's vision of the church as a community where profound human differences are reconciled?

Lecture Eleven

History and Theology

Scope: Most scholars today think that the three letters to Paul's delegates (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) were written pseudonymously after Paul's death and, when read not as real letters but as a fictional correspondence, reveal a stage of development in the organization of early Christianity. The approach in this lecture is to entertain another hypothesis, namely, that they are real letters with separate purposes. The lecture pays particular attention to 1 Timothy to show that the elements of organization found in these letters are fully consonant with the situations faced by Paul in the first generation, and resemble the structure of the church found in his other letters much more than they resemble the structure of the mid-second-century church.

Outline

- I. The three letters of Paul to his delegates Timothy and Titus, usually designated the "Pastoral Letters," are little read or appreciated, even by avid supporters of Paul. They are regarded by most as written as much as a hundred years after Paul's death. Worse, they are seen as supporting a version of Paulinism that retreats from his radical egalitarian vision.
- II. The Pastorals were the first part of the Pauline collection to be challenged.
 - A. Until the nineteenth century, these letters were regarded as having been written by Paul.
 - B. In 1807, Friederich Schleiermacher challenged the authenticity of 1 Timothy. By the end of the nineteenth century, the three Pastorals had become and have remained most widely regarded as pseudonymous.
 - C. All the criteria used to "determine" inauthenticity apply in the case of these letters:
 1. They are difficult to place in Paul's career, as described by Acts and the other letters.
 2. They have distinctive stylistic elements—a much more Hellenistic sound and vocabulary that is not often found in Paul's other letters.
 3. They are seen to differ from the standard Pauline treatment of theology and ethics.
 4. For example, they discuss faith, hope and love, but these themes are treated with a slightly different tonality; Paul's male/female egalitarianism seems to have vanished (Paul disapproves of women speaking in the assembly and blames it all on Eve).
 - D. The Pastoral Letters are regarded as second-century versions of a domesticated Paulinism.
 1. They take Paul as their hero and carry forward some real Pauline themes.
 2. They represent an adaptation to a less eschatological, more worldly Christianity.
 3. In particular, they structure the church along the lines of a patriarchal household.
 - E. The "Pastorals" are regarded not as genuine letters at all but as a single literary composition in the form of letters.
 1. 2 Timothy provides a biographical setting for the handing down of tradition from a first to a second generation.
 2. 1 Timothy and Titus establish guidelines for a conservative version of Pauline Christianity.
- III. The three letters to Paul's delegates can, however, also be regarded as real letters written under Paul's authorization in his lifetime.
 - A. The criteria used to determine authenticity are deeply flawed, relying on the device of treating all three letters as a single unit while ignoring the diversity in the "undisputed" letters.
 - B. Once the letters are treated individually, they resemble other letters in the collection.
 1. The most striking similarity is between 2 Timothy and Philippians.
 2. 1 Timothy deals with a range of issues most like those in 1 Corinthians.
 3. Titus deals with a situation that most resembles that in Galatians.
 - C. The distinctiveness of the letters can be attributed to other factors, especially the particular role played by Paul's delegates and the literary form of the compositions.

1. Paul is writing to delegates, who are trained in Greek rhetoric. Thus, he uses language that they can relate to, including devices of Greco-Roman philosophy, such as medical imagery.
 2. 2 Timothy has the form of a personal *paraenetic* letter (a letter of advice) with elements of *protreptic* exhortation. This literary form was available to Paul.
 3. 1 Timothy and Titus are perfect examples of *mandata principis* letters, known from the third century B.C.E. and used to instruct delegates who represented a ruler in a particular region.
- IV. The question of community structure is a perfect test case of whether these letters are that much different from Paul's other letters.
- A. The conventional position holds that the authentic Paul was completely charismatic, depended on his own authority to direct his churches, and saw no need for any structure in his communities apart from the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 1. This view is held by those who would prefer early Christianity to not have institutions, which they consider to be bad.
 2. It is, however, naïve to suppose that a new community will last without some sort of structure.
 3. Because the "Pastorals" "impose" authority structures, they represent a "development" in early Christianity that is theologically unfortunate.
 - B. A closer look at the three letters requires an adjustment.
 1. 2 Timothy includes no reference to institutional structure, Titus has virtually none, and 1 Timothy provides so little information that we cannot reproduce the structure it assumes rather than imposes.
 2. The structure is simple, functional, and non-rationalized, resembling most the basic organization of Greco-Roman clubs and Hellenistic synagogues contemporary to Paul.
 - C. A closer look at the undisputed letters also yields surprising evidence.
 1. Gathering the scattered remarks Paul makes about local leadership, it is possible to state that he assumed such structure even in recently founded communities and that such organization was simple, functional, and non-rationalized.
 2. The organization of the "authentic" Pauline churches most resembles that in Greco-Roman clubs and Hellenistic synagogues and that sketched by 1 Timothy among the Pastoral Letters.
 - D. The exercise neither proves the authenticity of the Pastorals nor demonstrates their overall consistency with the other letters. But it shows the difficulty presented in studying Paul historically without theological bias and, positively, that even the earliest Pauline churches had some form of local authority.

Essential Reading:

First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus.

Supplementary Reading:

C. F. D. Moule, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: A Reappraisal*.

J. Bassler, *The Widow's Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim. 5:3–16*.

Questions to Consider:

1. What elements in the Pastoral Letters argue for and against the characterization of them as representing "bourgeois Christianity"?
2. What portrait of Paul is given by 2 Timothy?

Lecture Twelve

Paul's Influence

Scope: Paul's lasting effect on Christianity was through his letters. That collection formed the basis of the New Testament canon. The reading of them in worship through the centuries continued to shape Christian perceptions. Issues that Paul did not deal with well, subsequent Christianity didn't either. Paul was not strong on either sex or politics. Later Christians struggled with both. But three emphases in his letters continue to challenge all readers. First, he insists on the primacy of experience of the risen Jesus, empowerment through the Holy Spirit, and a faith that follows the pattern of Jesus. Second, he focuses on the moral character of the community rather than the privileges of the individual. Third, he shows his readers how to think. These three aspects of Paul brought Christianity into a fruitful conversation with the larger world of philosophy and continue to subvert all reductions of Christianity to mere religious routine.

Outline

- I. Paul's influence on the church and on the world came above all through his letters, which played both a pivotal and controversial role in the formation of the New Testament.
 - A. Evidence from the early second century suggests that Paul the Apostle was honored as a martyr and revered as a practical moral teacher.
 - B. His letters were also quickly collected and used by early teachers of impeccable orthodoxy, such as Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch.
 - C. Paul was also the favorite author of heterodox groups who exploited his polarizing rhetoric in their own cosmic dualism.
 1. Marcion regarded Paul as the only true teacher of the Christian movement. Marcion regarded spirit as good and matter as evil. He founded a radically dualistic form of Christianity, in which the God of the Old Testament, who created matter, was evil. Jesus revealed a new, true God to save humans from their physical captivity. Marcion's Christianity privileged virginity and asceticism and it ultimately died out.
 2. Paul's letters were vigorously interpreted by Gnostic teachers in the direction of a world-denying asceticism.
 - D. Paul's letters, together with the four Gospels, form the heart of the eventual orthodox canon.
 1. His letters follow the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, thus placing Paul in the company of the other apostles. His collection ends with the Pastorals, thus bracketing the more radical Paul with the more conservative Paul.
 2. The canonical arrangement creates the possibility for hearing a variety of Pauline voices.
- II. Paradoxically, it was Paul's theology that influenced the West rather than his moral pedagogy.
 - A. Paul's concern in his letters was not with theological propositions but with the stability and integrity of communities that he tried to shape according to the "mind of Christ."
 - B. But his thought—especially in Galatians, Romans, and the Corinthian letters—proved to be a resource for theologians seeking to establish positions, from Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century through Luther and Calvin in the sixteenth, to Karl Barth in the twentieth.
 1. Augustine was tormented by his own sexual drive and read Paul autobiographically. For Augustine, Romans 13 enabled him to become chaste. But Christianity became imbued with Augustine's view of sexuality as a human problem.
 2. Luther was an Augustinian monk who was tormented by his inability to keep the monastic rule perfectly. When he read Galatians, which proclaims freedom from the law, he too took Paul autobiographically. He tried to reform medieval Catholicism, with its emphasis on canon law and ritual, by calling for a return to the radical Paul, who espouses a personal relationship with God—through Scripture and faith alone.
 3. Karl Barth, one of the greatest twentieth-century theologians, was influenced by Kierkegaard and the senseless devastation of World War I. In his commentaries on Romans, Barth rejects the nineteenth-century view that Christianity is the bloom on the rose of social progress. He proposes, instead, that

what Christianity is about is much more tragic and deeply entrenched in humanity than simple social progress can remedy.

- C. As such, Paul's theology has most often proven to be a challenge to the tendency to turn Christianity into a system of law or to adapt it uncritically to dominant cultures.

III. Because of Paul's centrality and importance in the New Testament, some of his weaknesses turn out to be Christianity's weaknesses as well.

- A. The New Testament—above all its letters—consists in occasional writings addressing particular circumstances of the past. It cannot yield a consistent theology or ethics.
- B. Like other New Testament writers, Paul has been of limited usefulness as a guide to later Christians because of his historical circumstances.
 - 1. As a member of a small sect in the process of birth, Paul had no concept of Christianity's relationship to the larger political and cultural order.
 - 2. Paul's comments on sexuality are random and geared to the expectation of "all things passing away."
 - 3. Paul's views on slavery and gender—and, for that matter, on non-Jews—reflect the limitations and biases of a Jewish male in the patriarchal world of the Roman Empire.
- C. Paul's relativizing of gender, class, and ethnicity can have a liberating and equalizing effect. It can also result in confirming and conforming to conservative social constructions.
 - 1. For example, if whether you are male or female does not matter, why pay attention to male/female differences? If whether you are a slave or free does not matter, we can let slavery be.
 - 2. Thus, Paul has been invoked by conservatives to legitimize just the opposite of what he was really after—a more egalitarian form of community.

IV. Paul's most enduring importance is found, not in specific propositions, but in certain emphases that pervade all his letters.

- A. He takes his stand on the experience of the living God, who for Paul has been revealed most powerfully in the story of Jesus, because of whose death and resurrection, God's power is at work to transform humans. Jesus as the pattern for a new humanity is a powerful and evocative claim.
- B. He pays little attention to the fate or fortunes of individuals, keeping his eye constantly on the moral integrity of the community. Paul challenges every form of individualism at the expense of common good.
- C. Despite his objection to philosophy, Paul is, from beginning to end, a thinker. His refusal to provide one-size-fits-all answers and his insistence that his readers also think through the implications of experience for behavior has enabled Christianity to remain a flexible and adaptable religious tradition that has engaged and continues to engage the larger world of thought and culture.

Supplementary Reading:

Augustine, *On Grace and Free-Will*.

Martin Luther, *Death to the Law*.

Karl Barth, "The End of Religion," in Meeks, pp. 220–257.

Questions to Consider:

- 1. What good and bad things happened to Paul once his writings became "Scripture?"
- 2. What would be different about Christianity if Paul's letters were seriously taken as the "heart of the canon?"

Timeline

A chronology of Paul's career is possible in broad lines, though disputed in detail. The timeline here is based on that provided by J. Murphy-O'Connor in *Paul: A Critical Life*.

I. Life.

ca. 6 B.C.E.....	Birth
ca. 33	Conversion
34	Time in Arabia
34–37	Damascus
37	Jerusalem (first visit)
37–?	Syria and Cilicia
45–46	Antioch Winter
46	Journey to Galatia
46–48	Ministry in Galatia
48	Journey to Macedonia
48–50	Ministry in Macedonia
50	Journey to Corinth
50–51	Ministry in Corinth
51	Jerusalem (second visit)
51	Conference in Jerusalem
51–52	Antioch
52	Journey to Ephesus
52–54	Ephesus
54–55	Macedonia
55	Illyricum
55–56	Corinth Winter
56	Jerusalem (third visit)
57–61?	Jerusalem–Caesarea
61–62	Journey to Rome
62–64	Rome

Unlike many scholars, Murphy-O'Connor accepts the theory of a Pauline journey to Rome, followed by a second imprisonment and death:

64	Spain
64–66	Around the Aegean
67	Death in Rome

II. Letters. These are much harder. Only five letters can be dated with some security:

ca. 50–51	1 and 2 Thessalonians
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ca. 54–55 1 and 2 Corinthians
ca. 55–56 Romans

Glossary

Acts of the Apostles (also Acts): The second volume of the Gospel of Luke, which devotes a considerable attention to Paul and remains an indispensable source for his life, if not for his thought.

Agape (Greek): Usually translated simply as “love,” the term has the precise nuance of a disposition that seeks the good of the other.

Anti-Semitic: A hatred or hostility toward Jews; also *anti-Judaic*, which has the nuance of a disparaging of Jewish religion.

Apocalyptic: A view of history as tending toward a definite (divinely appointed) goal, usually in two stages: a present age of oppression, followed by a future age of triumph. Also, the literature associated with this outlook.

Apocryphal: Literature that was not included in the standard collection of Scripture in Judaism or Christianity.

Apostle: From the Greek term meaning “sent out with a commission,” the term used by early Christian leaders for their role as representatives of the risen Christ.

Authenticity: In this context, whether a writing is actually written by the author to whom it is ascribed, as in “the authentic Pauline letters,” meaning, “the ones Paul himself wrote.”

Baptism: The Christian ritual of initiation, carried out by means (probably) of immersion in water.

Canon: From the Greek term meaning “measure,” the standard collection of texts regarded as scriptural and the official writings of a community, whether Jewish or Christian.

Christ/Christology: The Greek term *Christos* means “anointed one,” and translates the Hebrew *Messiah*; Paul uses the term both technically and virtually, as the second name of Jesus. Christology is the study of the identity, nature, and functions of Jesus as Christ.

Circumcision: The Jewish ritual of initiation, traditionally derived from Abraham and signifying membership in the people Israel. For adult converts, circumcision would signify acceptance of the obligation to live according to the commandments of the law (Torah).

Commendation: One of the several kinds of letters used by Paul, as by other early Christians, with the same sense as the present-day “letter of recommendation”; see Philemon and Romans 16, as well as Paul’s disclaimers in 2 Corinthians.

Cross/Crucifixion: The distinctively Roman means of execution by impalement that Jesus of Nazareth suffered. For Paul, “the cross” can be used as shorthand for the entire pattern of Jesus’s existence.

Delegates: The role played by Paul’s associates Timothy and Titus; in effect, they were Paul’s “apostles,” who represented him in his churches.

Diaspora: Any place Jews lived that was not the land of Palestine. Thus, born in the Roman province of Cilicia, Paul was a “diaspora Jew.”

Diatribes: A form of instruction in Greco-Roman rhetoric and philosophy that used an imaginary interlocutor, a variety of stylistic devices to give the sense of a lively dialogue, and a structured mode of argumentation.

Disputed/undisputed letters: The conventional wisdom is that Paul himself wrote seven of his letters (Romans, Galatians, Philemon, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians). These are “undisputed” by scholars. All the rest are “disputed” with regard to their authenticity (2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus).

Ekklesia: Greek term that is used widely for all kinds of assemblies. In the New Testament, it is used for the Christian gathering and is uniformly translated as “church.”

Elpis: Greek noun that means “hope”; with faith and love, hope formed the triad of positive Christian dispositions toward God and neighbor.

Eschatology/eschatological: From the Greek term *eschata*, which means “last things,” the understanding of the “end-times.”

Faith: Often understood in terms of “belief,” the term in Paul has a richer range of connotations, including trust, hope, fidelity, and obedience. Paul often uses it as a verb, which is impossible in English, but shows the dynamic sense of the concept.

Gentile: One of two possible translations of the Greek term *ethnos*. The other is “nation.” Translation gets complicated: Paul is missionary to the nations, but his good news extends also to non-Jews, that is, “gentiles.”

Glossolalia: A spiritual gift of ecstatic speech, also called “speaking in tongues”; see especially 1 Corinthians 14.

Gospel: In Paul’s letters, the term does NOT refer to a narrative about Jesus of Nazareth, but rather to the proclamation of what God has accomplished in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Thus *to euangelion tou theou* = “the good news” from and about God.

Holy Spirit: In Paul, the powerful energy field from God that inhabits the community because of the resurrection of Jesus. It is personal but not fully distinct from Jesus as “Lord” (see 1 Corinthians 12:1–3).

Lord’s Supper: Found in 1 Corinthians 11, the other major ritual act (with baptism) in the Pauline churches, involving the sharing of food and the memory of the death of Jesus.

Mandata Principis: In Latin, “commands of a ruler”; used to designate letters that those in command sent to their delegates. They combined moral exhortation and practical instruction. 1 Timothy and Titus are perfect examples.

Messiah: In Hebrew, “the anointed one,” whose fundamental role was to deliver the Jewish people into safety. The term is applied very early to Jesus and translated as *Christos*, or “Christ.”

Midrash: Derived from the Hebrew term *darash* (“to search”), the noun refers to all forms of biblical interpretation found in Judaism contemporary with Paul. *Halachic Midrash* applied itself to legal parts of Scripture to determine community norms; *Haggadic Midrash* was the interpretation of everything else in Torah.

Nomos: The Greek term for “law,” it is used by Paul indiscriminately for every part of Scripture; thus, it is functionally equivalent to “Torah” in his lexicon.

Paraenetic: Traditional moral instruction, often by way of the imitation of models and the learning of maxims; one type of ancient letter was called “*paraenetic*,” and 2 Timothy fits the form.

Patriarchal: Again from *pater* (“father”), a view of reality and a way of structuring society that privileges males. Should be distinguished from androcentrism (a male perspective) and sexism (an active hostility toward women as women).

Patristic: From the Latin *pater* (“father”), the term used to designate the literature produced in the early centuries of Christianity after the New Testament (“the fathers of the church”).

Pharisee/pharisaism: The first-century Jewish sect to which Paul belonged, characterized by a deep devotion to Torah in all its aspects, as well as a flexible application of interpretive techniques.

Pistis/Pistis Christou: The term *pistis* means faith; for its sense in Paul, look under that term. The phrase *pistis Christou* is one that is hotly debated among scholars: Does it mean “faith in Christ,” (as traditionally read), or does it mean “faith of Christ,” that is, the human faith of Jesus toward God?

Polemic: From the Greek *polemos* (“war”), an attitude or style of writing characterized by belligerence and condemnation. It was a staple of ancient rhetoric. The Latin equivalent is *vituperatio*—vituperation.

Protreptic: A form of discourse (or letter) that encouraged the pursuit of a professed goal or ideal. Thus, a would-be philosopher would have *protreptic* addressed to him or her if enthusiasm lagged.

Pseudepigrapha: Literally, “things falsely written,” referring to literature that is produced under a name not the author’s, usually a famous person of the past.

Pseudonymous: Literally, “under a false name”; see pseudepigrapha.

Reconciliation: One of the central concepts in Paul's letters, it refers to the coming together of parties that have been alienated. Cognate is the concept of at-one-ment.

Resurrection: In Christian belief—certainly in Paul's—this term refers first to the entry of Jesus after his death into a share in God's life, so that he lives more powerfully than before as "Lord." Second, it refers to the hope that Paul shared with all Pharisees in the future triumph of God, in which all the righteous would share.

Rhetoric: In antiquity, rhetoric was the backbone of education; it referred not only to saying things well ("style") but above all, to making good arguments.

Saints: For Paul, the common designation for members of the church. They have the "Holy Spirit" and so can be called "holy ones" (holiness and sanctification language in Greek is the same).

World: For Paul, the realm of human activity; at times, he uses it in contrast to the church or the "saints."

Bibliography

Essential Readings

The essential readings are translations of Paul's letters, which readers can find in any edition of the Bible, ranging from the sonorous King James Bible to the idiomatic New English Bible. I recommend two translations.

The first is the New Revised Standard Version, which appears in many formats. Useful is *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, edited by B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). The NRSV has the advantage of using the best available manuscript evidence and of being gender-inclusive, although it has its limitations as a translation. An annotated Bible also provides useful supplementary information.

I actually prefer the older Revised Standard Version, which is not gender-inclusive, but is often more accurate than the NRSV. This version is found, with wonderful notes and critical essays, in W. A. Meeks, *The Writings of St. Paul*, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), cited here as Meeks.

Supplementary Readings

Banks, R. *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980. A nontechnical and accessible treatment of Paul from a perspective similar to that in this course—as a builder of communities.

Bassler, J. "The Widow's Tale: A Fresh Look at 1 Tim. 5:3–16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103 (1984): 23–41. A reading of a difficult passage from a feminist perspective, supporting a view of the Pastorals as suppressing women's ministries.

Borchert, G. L. *Paul and His Interpreters*. Madison: Intervarsity Press, 1985. Provides an annotated bibliography for work on Paul; a useful sequel to the classic by Schweitzer with the same title.

Bultmann, R. *Theology of the New Testament*. Volume 1. Trans. K. Grobel. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951. By any measure, one of the great theological interpreters of the New Testament in the twentieth century, who reads Paul in the light of existentialist categories.

Dahl, N. A. *Studies in Paul*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing Company, 1977. These short essays by the master Norwegian scholar are filled with insight and written with great clarity and precision. I have cited several of them for supplementary reading.

Davies, W. D. *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*. 4th edition. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980. Davies is insufficiently critical on some points concerning the dating of rabbinic materials, but his work retains its value as a compendium of information pertinent to Paul's Palestinian Jewish background.

Deissman, A. *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*. 2nd edition. New York: Harper and Row, 1927. Deissman was a pioneer in using archaeological and inscriptional evidence in interpreting the New Testament and gives a fresh read to Paul as a religious figure in Hellenistic society.

Doty, W. G. *Letters in Primitive Christianity*. 2nd edition. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973. An accessible and very useful guide to early Christian epistolography in the Greco-Roman and Jewish context.

Dunn, J. D. G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998. A recent entry in the endless line of theological studies of Paul, this British version has the distinction of combining some of the best of the continental tradition of scholarship with more recent Anglo-American readings of Paul. Also offers a good emphasis on the role of experience and the Holy Spirit in Paul.

Elliott, J. K. *The Apocryphal New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Contains translations of the major apocryphal writings pertinent to the study of the New Testament. For this course, it contains the Acts of Paul and various apocryphal letters attributed to Paul.

Ellis, E. E. *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981 [1957]. This slender volume pays particular attention to the techniques of citation and the texts that Paul uses, showing how thoroughly immersed he was in the world of Torah.

Engberg-Pedersen, T. (ed.) *Paul in his Hellenistic Context*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. The volume contains a set of essays typical of recent efforts to interpret Paul from the side of Greco-Roman culture. The essay by S.K. Stowers on "writing in character" is particularly pertinent.

Georgi, D. *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992. One of the leading experts in the Corinthian correspondence traces the texts pertaining to this major fund-raising effort at the height of Paul's career in the East.

Hays, R. B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989. More literarily sensitive than Ellis (see above), Hays shows how Paul's reading of Scripture influences his language and thought even when he is not directly citing it.

———. *The Faith of Jesus*. SBLDS 56; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983. Hays is one of several scholars in recent years to challenge the common understanding of Paul on faith, arguing (correctly, in my view) that in several key places in his letters, Paul places explicit emphasis on the human faith of Jesus toward God.

Hock, R. F. *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980. Hock's study of Paul in the context of Cynic philosophy makes excellent sense of several difficult problems in his letters, especially the issues at dispute in 2 Corinthians.

Jewett, R. *A Chronology of Paul's Life*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979. As the title suggests, Jewett works through the data pertinent to the reconstruction of Paul's career. The student can profitably compare the method and results to those of Murphy-O'Connor (see below).

Johnson, L. T. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. 2nd edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. A comprehensive introduction to the literature of the New Testament and the process by which it arose. A special chapter is devoted to Paul's career and correspondence, as well as to the respective letters. Provides extensive additional bibliography.

Kaesemann, E. *Perspectives on Paul*. Trans. M. Kohl. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971. Kaesemann stands in the German tradition of theological interpretation of Paul and represents a more engaged, worldly reading than that of R. Bultmann (see above).

Kidd, R. M. *Wealth and Beneficence in the Pastoral Epistles: A "Bourgeois" Form of Early Christianity?* SBLDS 122; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990. A solid and independent investigation of the social world embedded in the letters of Paul to his delegates, suggesting that it is a world similar in most respects to that revealed by the undisputed letters.

MacDonald, M. Y. *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*. SNTSMS 60; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. A worthy representative of the scholarship that traces development in the Pauline tradition from simplicity to complexity, lacking the usual theological bias that often blights similar work.

MacDonald, R. D. *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983. An imaginative effort to place the Pastoral Letters in the stream of second-century Christianity, using folkloric as well as literary methods.

Malherbe, A. J. *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989. A collection of essays that examines a variety of ways in which Paul's voice can usefully be compared to the moral philosophers in the Stoic and Cynic traditions.

———. *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophic Tradition of Pastoral Care*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987. The way in which moral teachers of the Greco-Roman world conceived of and carried out their "pastoral" vocation provides the framework for this analysis of Paul's relationship to the church in Thessalonika.

Martin, D. B. *The Corinthian Body*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995. A provocative reading of the Corinthian correspondence (especially 1 Corinthians) from the perspective of social-scientific analysis, making particular use of cultural anthropology.

Mearns, C. L. "Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of First and Second Thessalonians," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980): 137–157. On the assumption that both letters are genuine, the article provides a good review of the state of eschatological expectation reflected in the correspondence.

Meeks, W. A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. The classic expression of social world analysis of the New Testament, this volume contains virtually all that can be known—or confidently guessed—about the shape of Paul's communities, with special attention to Corinth.

Mitchell, M. M. *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991. A substantial and sophisticated

analysis of Paul's rhetoric in 1 Corinthians that demonstrates his fundamental concern for community fellowship and edification.

Moule, C. F. D. "The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: A Reappraisal," *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 47 (1965): 430–452. A typically elegant and sane analysis by the British scholar that sorts through the issues, then offers a surprising, though sensible, solution.

Munck, J. *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind*. Trans. E. Clarke. Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959. A neglected study of great independence and acuity of judgment, that uses 2 Thessalonians as an important key to Paul's self-understanding. The best treatment of the situation in Galatia.

Murphy-O'Connor, J. *Paul: A Critical Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Flawed by some idiosyncratic judgments, this work is the most recent and thorough attempt to provide a full-fledged "life" of Paul. Despite its literary weakness, reliable on the historical information.

Murphy-O'Connor, J., and Charlesworth, J. H. *Paul and the Dead Sea Scrolls*. New York: Crossroad, 1990. A collection of essays by reputable scholars on all the possible points of contact between the Jewish sectarians at Qumran and the letters of Paul.

Neyrey, J. H. *Paul, In Other Words: A Cultural Reading of His Letters*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. Making especially heavy use of the categories of Mary Douglas, this study seeks to examine Paul strictly according to the canons of cultural anthropology.

O'Brien, P. T. *Introductory Thanksgivings in the Letters of Paul*. Nov. Sup. 49; Leiden: Brill, 1977. Building on the work of Paul Schubert, O'Brien demonstrates how the thanksgiving at the beginning of Paul's letters serves not only as a moment of prayer but also as an instrument of persuasion, anticipating themes that are developed in the body of the letter.

Pagels, E. *The Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975. Pagels shows how Paul's dualistic tendencies and polarizing language were taken over by Gnostics, making Paul the favorite "Apostle of the heretics."

Petersen, N. R. *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985. A remarkable blending of literary and social-world analysis, this close reading of Philemon yields a thick description of Paul's world.

Sanders, E. P. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977. A highly influential study of Paul in the context of Palestinian Judaism that helped counter a centuries-long habit of anti-Judaic readings of Paul's theology.

Schuessler-Fiorenza, E. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. New York: Crossroad, 1983, esp. pp. 160–284. This pioneering work of feminist criticism of the New Testament provides a provocative rereading of an originally egalitarian Jesus movement that is already partially subverted by Paul the patriarch.

Schweitzer, A. *Paul and His Interpreters*. Trans. W. Montgomery. New York: MacMillan and Company, 1912. Better known for his 1906 classic on the quest for the historical Jesus, Schweitzer provided an equally insightful study of Paul's interpreters of the nineteenth century.

Segal, A. F. *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Paul the Pharisee*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. Written by a Jewish scholar who is absolutely knowledgeable on early Christianity, this reading of Paul's career offers fresh perspectives.

Stendahl, K. *Paul among Jews and Gentiles*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976. This collection of essays by a contemporary Scandinavian scholar is significant for placing Paul within Judaism and for reversing a long history of reading Romans in terms of Paul's struggle with the law. The essay "Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" is a classic of historical criticism at its best.

Stowers, S. K. *Letter-Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986. A useful review of the various literary conventions found in ancient epistolography, with constant application to the letters found in the New Testament.

Theissen, G. *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*. Trans. J. H. Schuetz. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981. A collection of studies that connect the "theological" disputes in Corinth to real-life contexts of social and economic disparity.

Wedderburn, A. J. M. *The Reasons for Romans*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. Building on “the Romans debate,” Wedderburn sorts through the evidence supporting the various hypotheses and, in the process, provides a good introduction to Romans itself.

Wire, A. C. *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul’s Rhetoric*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. Informed by a feminist perspective on how power works and how rhetoric can shape reality, this study seeks to find out what was really happening with women in the Corinthian congregations.